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Affirmation:
United Methodists for Gay and Lesbian Concerns
Post Office Box 1021 Evanston, Illinois 60204
FALL 1985

WOW! What a Birthday!!

AFFIRMATION celebrated its tenth anniversary in Evanston, Illinois, the weekend of September 20-22. More than 60 people from at least seventeen states participated in the observance. Attendance by non gay persons was the largest ever. Wheadon United Methodist Church, a member of the Reconciling Congregation Program, was host for the anniversary meeting, as it was for the organizing event in July of 1975.

Among the participants were three of the original organizers, Gene Legget of Dallas, Texas; Richard Husky of Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Steve Webster, of Madison Wisconsin. All three are former United Methodist clergy who were forced to leave the professional ministry because of their sexual orientation.

Jesse L. DeWitt, resident Bishop of the Northern Illinois Conference, greeted the nearly two hundred persons attending a commemorative worship service.

Participants developed plans to strengthen the regional and local support base of AFFIRMATION through networking and special events. Regional organizing is a significant change to a more grassroots focus. More and more local and regional groups are meeting all around the country. (See insert)

Leaders of the Reconciling Congregation Program reported that as of the Sept. 20-22 weekend there were fourteen local churches in the program, located in Seattle, San Francisco, Milpitas (California), Fresno (California), Denver, Evanston (Illinois), Toledo, Nasville, Philadelphia, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Baltimore and Madison (Wisconsin). (As of this writing a fifteenth congregation has joined the Program--a full listing appears elsewhere in this newsletter.) They also told of enthusiastic response to the first issue of MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY, a quarterly journal of resource materials for Reconciling Congregations. The second issue, dealing with lesbian and gay health concerns, was to be published the end of October. (See more details about upcoming issues and subscription instructions elsewhere in this newsletter.) Cont. p. 5

RCP Update

The Reconciling Congregation Program is a network of United Methodist local churches who publicly affirm their ministry with the whole family of god and who welcome lesbians and gay men into the membership and leadership of their community life. In this network, Reconciling Congregations find strength and support as they strive to overcome the divisions caused by prejudice and homophobia in our church and our society. These congregations strive to offer the hope that the church can be a reconciled community.

To enable local churches to engage in these ministries the program provides resource materials including MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY. Regional enablers are available locally to assist a congregation which is seeking to become a Reconciling Congregation. Cont. p. 5

RAVE Reviews

The first issue of MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY was distributed across the country early in the summer! It has received rave reviews! The second issue--"Living and Dying With AIDS" has just reached subscribers. The major purpose of MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY is to serve as a resource and communications vehicle for Reconciling Congregations. Further, it is a major personal and collective resource for and expression of lesbian and gay concerns.

The themes of the next six issues:

- Issue 3 - Civil and Legal Rights of Lesbians/Gay Men
- Issue 4 - Family-related Concerns
- Issue 5 - U.M.C. Official Policy Regarding Lesbians/Gay Men
- Issue 6 - Healing Ministries (with an analysis of the "ex-gay myth) Cont. p. 6

APRIL in Seattle!!!

AFFIRMATION will hold its first meeting in the Pacific Northwest since the 1976 General Conference, when we meet in Seattle, Washington, April 4-6, 1986. Hosts will be Seattle's lively local AFFIRMATION group and two reconciling congregations. No doubt they will be ably supported by their neighbors to the near south, the Portland AFFIRMATION group.

Program plans for that meeting are to offer workshops on issues of interest to potential participants. Among the ideas being considered are to take advantage of the location in the hopes of learning with and from lesbian and gay Asians and Native Americans. Other suggestions have included workshops on relationships, health concerns, women's and men's spirituality, the connections between spirituality and sexuality and more.

If you are planning to attend next April's meeting (and who would miss a visit to the place that defined "liquid sunshine")----or even if you aren't your input is needed now. If there is something you want to learn more about, or if there is something you can share with others, your suggestions will be gratefully received. Obviously, time will allow only some ideas to be implemented at this meeting, but the ideas you send will also be useful in the future.

The planning committee hopes to have program ideas more or less in place before Christmas, so send your suggestions now to either Morris Floyd or D. J. Porter at the addresses listed elsewhere in this newsletter. (page 6)

$25,000 or bust!!

In less than 24 hours AFFIRMATION members and friends attending the Tenth Anniversary celebration in Chicago pledged more than $10,000 to our work!!! Under the exciting expert leadership of a six-member Fundraising Task Force, AFFIRMATION is beginning a new era of support building, with a 1986 goal of $25,000!!!

Included in the comprehensive plans are:

- a Stay-at-home tea
- increased pledge activity
- Donor underwriters for MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY
- Foundation grants
- production of AFFIRMATION COOKBOOK: "Cooking with Grace and Discipline"
- and much more!!!

Jump on board with your own monthly pledge to AFFIRMATION and a "perfect" recipe. Also send along suggested names of MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY underwriters and/or Foundation sources to PO Box 1921 Evanston, IL 60204.

Mark your Calendar Now!!

1986.....	(Seattle, WA).....	April 4-5
	(to be announced)...	Sept. 19-21
1987.....	(to be announced)...	April 24-26
	(St. Louis, MO).....	Sept. 18-20
1988.....	(St. Louis, MO).....	April 22-24
	(to be announced)...	Sept. 16-18

COSROW Study

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, at its Sept. 19-22 meeting in Techny, IL, adopted initial plans to study the effects of homophobia on the United Methodist Church and its linkage to sexism. The study will be conducted at the 1986 spring meeting and will focus on sexism and heterosexism from woman's perspective.

AFFIRMATION has been asked to assist with the study. To this end Spokesperson Mary Gaddis has been named to the design team, which held its first planing session October 28 and 29. Five out United Methodist Lesbians will be involved as resource persons for the study.

AFFIRMATION is glad COSROW is doing this study and deeply appreciates that somewhere in the United Methodist Church someone is moving on this issue.

Contacted at the site of the first design team session, Mary Gaddis said, "I'm just very glad they're doing this study. They could have easily not done it. They've really been willing to struggle to get where they are!"

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United Methodists for Gay and Lesbian Concerns
FALL '85

REGIONAL ORGANIZING

AFFIRMATION'S work in Regional Organizing is growing by leaps and bounds. We now have fourteen local groups, with more being organized at this moment. To help facilitate this growth process, one of the decisions made in Chicago was to establish regions in which local groups could meet and plan together. The boundaries for these are tentative and flexible. The regions are:

- Northeast - all of the present Northeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC, plus the Virginia Conference
- South - all of the present Southeastern Jurisdiction of the UMC, plus the Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Texas Conferences
- North Central - all of the present North Central Jurisdiction of the UMC
- Mountains & Plains - the Kansas, Nebraska, Rocky Mountain, and Yellowstone Conferences
- Southwest & Pacific - the two California and the Desert Southwest Conferences
- Northwest Coast - the Pacific Northwest and Oregon-Idaho Conferences

Within these boundaries we have set a goal of holding one AFFIRMATION event in each region before the summer of 1986. The major responsibility for putting each of these events together will rest in the hands of the existing local groups in each region, with assistance and support coming from AFFIRMATION at the general church level. We realize that this is ambitious, but it is not beyond the capacity of AFFIRMATION to do this. You'll be hearing more about plans for these events in the near future.

A second major decision coming out of Chicago was to produce a "how to"/orientation packet to assist persons in organizing local groups. D.J. Porter of New Hope, PA, Maggie Roe of Lincoln, NB, and "Skeeter" Young of LaFayette, LA, will have a draft for us to consider at the Spring 1986 semi-annual national meeting. Any comments or suggestions as to what should go into that packet should be directed to D.J. at [redacted] New Hope, PA, [redacted].

A third decision made in Chicago was to begin publishing a regular "Regional Organizing Page" in the AFFIRMATION Newsletter. (This is our first page!) Initially Shirley Taylor and John Hannay, national co-coordinators of AFFIRMATION'S Regional Organizing, will edit this page, since they will be most frequently in touch with Regional Organizing Contacts. (See box elsewhere for these names) After awhile, we hope a separate editor could be set up for this page.

We hope you share the enthusiasm for AFFIRMATION'S regional organizing work! It has progressed far beyond our original expectations for this date. We are excited!

(News from 6 of Affirmation's 14 local groups appears here.
News from other groups will appear in subsequent issues.)

NEBRASKA AFFIRMATION

On second Fridays every month, Nebraska Affirmation holds an evening meeting. Meetings alternate between Omaha and Lincoln. They include fellowship, group organizing and personal sharing. Also periodically addressed is the work of strategizing to make a wider impact in the area (e.g. Reconciling Congregation work, avenues of visibility, etc.) Currently the group is hard at work as a co-sponsor for a Feb. 28--Mr. 1, 1986 Conference to be held in Lincoln, titled "Spirituality and Homosexual Persons: A Gift to the Church"

[redacted] Lincoln NE [redacted]

NASHVILLE AFFIRMATION

Over an October weekend Nashville Affirmation met in a retreat setting. Using periods of individual silent discernment and collective sharing, members remembered where we have been and envisioned our future through the remainder of the '80s. Using the timeline method as experienced by National AFFIRMATION in Chicago, we celebrated our 5 years as Nashville Affirmation and began planing for our next 5 years. Regular meetings are held each fourth Wednesday and include a potluck supper plus time for personal sharing and/or topical discussions.

[redacted] Nashville,TN [redacted]

MID-ATLANTIC AFFIRMATION

Weekly meetings are held at 6p.m. Sundays, Dumbarton UMC, Georgetown. At a recent session to plan Mid-Atlantic Affirmation's ministry for the next 18 months, topics included community outreach, weekly worship and fellowship, educational development and outreach to the church institution. October 6 Mid-Atlantic Affirmation joined with St. John's UMC, Baltimore, MD in a service of worship celebrating St. John's participation as a Reconciling Congregation.

[redacted] Wash. DC

One of the best sources of good ideas and support as we undertake Regional Organizing is each other. At the recent Chicago meeting the following persons volunteered to be contact points and assistants for others needing help. Those persons (by region) are listed below. Feel free to ask them for help!

Northeast-

- D.J. Porter, [redacted] New Hope, PA [redacted]
- Don McGaw, [redacted] Wintrop, MA [redacted]

South-

- Tim Tyner, [redacted] Dallas, TX [redacted]
- Jule Ann Young, LaFayette, LA [redacted]
- Nashville Affirmation, Nashville, TN [redacted]

North Central-

- Mary Jo Osterman, Evanston, IL [redacted]
- Steve Webster, Madison, WI [redacted]

Mountains & Plains-

- Maggie Roe, Lincoln, NE [redacted]

Southwest & Pacific-

- Fritz Schultz, [redacted] San Francisco, CA [redacted]
- Cal-Pac Affirmation, Hollywood, CA [redacted]

Northwest Coast-

- Chuck Richards, [redacted] Seattle, WA [redacted]
- Terry Voss, [redacted] Portland OR [redacted]

National Coordinators-

- Shirley Taylor, Alameda, CA [redacted]
- John Hannay, Wash. DC [redacted]

SEATTLE AFFIRMATION

Seattle Affirmation began its second year of "Third Thursday" panels with "The Church's Role in the Fight Against AIDS" 19 Sept. Sixty-five Seattle-area friends heard Barry Bianchi, Pam Ryan, and Ed Perry speak on specific issues affecting AIDS patients and their friends in their struggle for public funding and emotional support during their fight with the disease. $178 was raised by a free-will offering for the Northwest AIDS Foundation that evening. October's "Third Thursday" focused on a panel discussion, "Gay People in the Clergy". In November "Pink Triangles" will be shown. The film portrays the historical roots of homophobia in contemporary American attitudes. This showing is being jointly sponosred by Parents FLAG and Seattle AFFIRMATION. The Third Thursday series is held at Wallingford UMC, a Reconciling Congregation, N. 42nd at Bagley Ave., North. A regular newsletter is published.

[redacted] Seattle, WA [redacted]

MADISON AFFIRMATION

Gathering twice a month on the first and third Sundays, Madison Affirmation discusses a variety of topics such as "Change" and "Roots". Their gathering place is Univeristy United Methodist Church, a Reconciling Congregation.

[redacted] Madison, WI [redacted]

LOS ANGELES AFFIRMATION

LA Affirmation meets the first Tues. of each month, with the content varying from fellowship to topical events. They were instrumental in getting a resolution passed during the Cal-Pacific Annual Conference session titled "Affirming Lesbian and Gay Men in the Church". In November they will host a gathering for the Reconciling Congregation Program to discover interest and strategize next steps. LA Affirmation has taken the lead in AIDS work for the LA area. They comprise the core of the Spiritual Advisory Committee for the LA AIDS Committee. They are also central in the West Hollywood Ecumenical Network sponsoring once-a-month AIDS healing services for persons with AIDS, their lovers, friends and family.

[redacted] LosAngeles, CA [redacted]

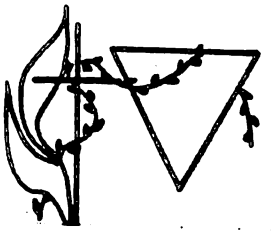
(We invite local Affirmation groups and individuals to duplicate this insert for distribution)

RCP Update from p. 1

The program is recruiting a network of "enablers". Each enabler will serve to recruit prospective Reocnciling Congregations, work with local churches which are in process of becoming an RC, and serve as a resource to existing Reconciling Congregations within her/his annual conference or area. The development of this network of volunteer enablers is key to the future growth of the program.

May 3 and 4, 1985, a training model for volunteer enablers was tested in the Northeastern Jurisdiciton. The two-day event concentrated on basic skills of community organizing and local church engagement. All participants were enthusiastic about the event and returned ready to begin their work.

Enablers are now being recruited in the North Central and Western Jurisdictions. Training events in these areas will be held this winter or spring. We invite your suggestions of persons who might serve as enablers and also about the work they will be doing. (RCP, [redacted] Nashville, TN [redacted])



reconciling congregation program

The Reconciling Congregation Program is appreciative of individuals and congregations who have sent contributions to help cover printing and communication expenses. To date, expenses still outdistance contributions even though spending has been frugal. As participation in the program grows and subscriptions to MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY increase we trust the financial situation will change. We will be grateful for any financial assistance AFFIRMATION members and friends can provide, and believe the work we're engaged in together is crucial to the vitality and integrity of the church today and in the future.

Cont. p. 6

BIRTHDAY from p. 1

AFFIRMATION is all too aware of the AIDS epidemic. It is a threat to all people regardless of gender, race, class or sexual orientation, although approximately seventy-five percent of those diagnosed to date are gay men. Persons present for the Sept. 20-22 anniversary weekend noted that this crisis impacts all of our lives and were equally aware of the incredible silence of the United Methodist Church regarding AIDS. The 1984 General Conference refused to take up a proposed resolution concerning the epidemic. AFFIRMATION will prepare a detailed statement for release following the Coordinating Committee meeting in February of 1986.

Selection of a new Coordinating Committee is scheduled for the April 4-5, 1986 national meeting, to be held in Seattle, Washington. (See articles elsewhere in this newsletter about both thenominating process for the Coordinating Committee and the April, 1986 meeting.)

Those attending the anniversary gathering pledged more than $10,000 to support AFFIRMATION'S work. They also attended a gala birthday dinner-dance, held at Hemenway United Methodist Church to celebrate our movement of the past; support our work of the present; and encourage our dreams for the future. AFFIRMATION Spokesperson Mary Gaddis was MC for the evening and captivated the audience with several musical numbers!

The weekend concluded with a joyful worship celebration shared by members of both AFFIRMATION and the Wheadon Church congregation. The preachers were the Rev. Virginia Hilton of Albany, California and the Rev. Paul Abels, of Rennsaelerville, New York. Virginia is the mother of a gay man and the first non-gay member of AFFIRMATION'S Coordinating Committee. Paul, who retired from the ministry in the spring of 1984, was the first openly gay United Methodist minister to be appointed. Spokesperson Morris Floyd, an openly gay United Methodist minister, joined Wheadon church pastor Barbara Jean Rommel-Finger in celebrating communion. The Rev. Donna Atkinson, District Superintendent, also participated in the service.

A timeline was used throughout the weekend as AFFIRMATION remembered its ten year history and the experiences of lesbians and gays in the church prior to AFFIRMATION. The timeline was also used to dream about the future and to share our hope that, through the justice seeking of the United Methodist Church, AFFIRMATION as an organization will no longer be needed.

Nominating begins

AFFIRMATION'S present structure calls for a ten-member Coordinating Committee, composed of five men and five women. The Coordinating Committee is elected to serve for two years. In addition to gen der parity, AFFIRMATION is commited to geographical, age and background diversity on the Coordinating Committee.

The current Coordinating Committee will complete its term in April, 1986. Your input into the nominating process for the next Coordinating Committee is very important to the ongoing strength of AFFIRMATION. Please give careful consideration to this request and make your suggestions no later than Feb. 1.

The process includes the following:

- In consultation with a 4-member committee named at the Sept. 20-22 meeting, the present Coordinating Committee is instructed to prepare a slate of 10 nominations and 2 alternates.
- Names will be solicited and submitted between Sept. 1985 and Feb. 1986. Send all names to Nominations Coordinator Lyle Loder, [redacted] Hollywood, CA, [redacted] no later than Feb. 1, 1986.
- Prior to submitting their names(s), it will greatly assist the process if you make every effort to check with the person(s) regarding their willingness to serve if asked.
- At its Feb. 15-17 meeting, the present Coordinating Committee, in continuing consultation with the 4 persons named in Chicago, will consider all names submitted, then finalize a 10-member slate with 2 alternates.
- Between Feb. 17 and April 4, all persons slected for the final slate will be offically contacted to verify their readiness and williness to serve if elected.
- The finalized slate will be presented during the April 4-6 meeting in Seattle for final action by AFFIRMATION members present.
- In addition to election of the coordinating Committee, Spokespersons for AFFIRMATION will also be named at the April, 1986, meeting.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS IMPORTANT PART OF AFFIRMATION'S LIFE!!!!

RAVE REVIEWS from p. 1

- Issue 7 - Homophobia and Heterosexism
- Issue 8 - Sexuality and Spirituality

If you have not yet subscribed please do so immediately! Subscriptions to MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY are $10 and may be ordered by writing PO Box 23636, Wash. DC 20026. Single copies are $3.00.

The Reconciling Congregation Program welcomes your comments on issues of MANNA FOR THE JOURNEY. If you have suggestions for persons to write on any of the themes or suggestions of themes for future issues, please notify the program by writing to [redacted] Nashville, TN [redacted]

RCP from p. 5

As we share the following list of the fifteen Reconciling Congregations, it is noteworthy that Seattle and New York City now have two Reconciling Congregations. Good work by folks there!

- Bethany UMC, San Francisco, CA
- Calvary UMC, Philadelphia, PA
- Capitol Hill UMC, Seattle, WA
- Central UMC, Toledo, OH
- Christ UMC, Washington, DC
- Edgehill UMC, Nashville, TN
- Park Slope UMC, New York, NY
- St. John's UMC, Baltimore, MD
- St. Paul's UMC, Denver, CO
- Sunnyhills UMC, Milpitas, CA
- University UMC, Madison, WI
- Wallingford UMC, Seattle, WA
- Washington Square UMC, New York, NY
- Wesley UMC, Fresno, CA
- Wheadon UMC, Evanston, IL

COORDINATING COMMITTEE

John Hannay
[redacted]
Washington, DC [redacted]

D.J. Porter
[redacted]
New Hope, PA [redacted]

Virginia Hilton
[redacted]
Albany, CA [redacted]

Shirley Taylor
[redacted]
Alameda, CA [redacted]

Mary Larue
[redacted]
Philadelphia, PA [redacted]

Lyle Loder
[redacted]
Los Angeles, CA [redacted]

SPOKESPERSONS

Mike Underhill
[redacted]
Chicago, IL [redacted]

Two Lesbian Members whose names cannot be used.

Mary Gaddis
[redacted]
Holy City, CA [redacted]

Morris Floyd
[redacted]
Minneapolis, MN [redacted]